

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-12 ISO-00 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 INR-10
IO-14 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-08 NRC-07 OES-07
SOE-02 DODE-00 DOE-15 SS-15 SP-02 CEQ-01 PM-05
H-02 PA-02 ICA-20 /166 W
-----093915 140246Z /73

R 130738Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1592
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KAHMANDU
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 7568

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINR IN US
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER ON NANDA DEVICE

1. IN THE QUESTION HOUR IN PARLIAMENT MAY 12, PRIME MINISTER DESAI SAID THAT THE CIA WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NANDA DEVI PROJECT SINCE IT HAD BEEN STARTED NOT FROM AMERICA, BUT "AT THE INSTANCE OF HIGH OFFICIALS HERE" AND INDIA ALSO HAD SENT PEOPLE TO THE UNITED STATES FOR TRAINING IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROJECT. INTERVENING IN A SUPPLEMENTARY INTRODUCED BY CPI MEMBER, DESAI REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE CIA MIGHT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHER EXPLOITS BUT COULD NOT BE BLAMED FOR PLANTING THE PLUTONIUM PACK ON NANDA DEVI. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, WHEN THE CPI MEMBER PERSISTED IN HIS REMARKS, DESAI ASKED, "WHY THE CIA IS ON HIS BRAIN. LET KGB BE THERE ALSO."

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2. DESAI ALSO REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PARLIAMENT THAT WHEN THE REPORTS OF THE DEVICE FIRST APPEARED, INFORMATION WAS NOT AVAILABLE TO THE GOI AND THEREFORE THE GOVERNMENT CONTACTED THE US EMBASSY AND GOT "THE FACTS ON WHEN IT ALL STARTED." EARLIER, FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE READ OUT A PREPARED ANSWER TO THE INQUIRY IN WHICH HE STATED THAT

THE USG HAD COOPERATED FULLY IN PROVIDING INDIAN TECHNICAL
DETAILS ON THE DEVICE AND IN ASSESSING POSSIBLE HAZARDS.
VAJPAYEE SAID THAT AN EXPERT COMMITTEE OF INDIAN SCIENTISTS

WOULD PREPARE A REPORT ON THE DEVICE WHICH THE GOVERNMENT
WOULD STUDY BEFORE TAKING ANY NECESSARY ACTION.

3. THE PRESS REPORTED THE NANDA DEVI DISCUSSION IN
RELATIVELY BRIEF FORM ON THE INSIDE PAGES. WE WILL POUCH
TRANSCRIPT OF THE REMARKS OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER
WHEN THEY BECOME AVAILABLE.
GOHEEN

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